

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6149

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 0454

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MA, FR

SUBJ: HEAD OF GOVT RAMANANTSOA AT POMPIDOU MEMORIAL SERVICE

BEGIN SUMMARY: MALAGASY HEAD OF GOVT RAMANANTSOA HAS LEFT MADAGASCAR FOR FIRST TIME SINCE ASSUMED OFFICE TO ATTEND POMPIDOU FUNERAL. GESTURE DESIGNED RENEW GOODWILL OF FRENCH, VERY MANY OF WHOM HAVE SEEN GOMR AS MOVING STEADILY INTO ANTI-FRENCH, PRO-COMMUNIST CAMP. AS RESULT, FRENCH INTEREST IN AID TO MADAGASCAR COULD BE REVIVED. FONMIN RATSIRAKA, ACCOMPANYING RAMANANTSOA, WILL PROCEED DIRECTLY TO UNGA. END SUMMARY.

1. MALAGASY HEAD OF GOVT MAJGEN GABRIEL RAMANANTSOA MADE APPARENTLY SUDDEN DECISION AFTERNOON 04APR TO ATTEND POMPIDOU MEMORIAL SERVICE AND DEPARTED SAME EVENING FOR PARIS, ACCOMPANIED BY WIFE AND FONMIN DIDIER RATSIRAKA.

2. THIS IS RAMANANTSOA'S FIRST TRIP OUTSIDE MADAGASCAR SINCE HE TOOK OVER IN MAY 72. GESTURE IS OBVIOUSLY CALCULATED TO ASSUAGE FRENCH FEARS, BOTH AT OFFICIAL AND LOCAL BUSINESS LEVELS, THAT PRESENT GOMR IS BEING LED IRREVERSIBLY DOWN ANTI-FRENCH, PRO-COMMUNIST PATH BY RATSIRAKA AND OTHERS IN RAMANANTSOA'S CLOSE ENTOURAGE. WE TOO FIND IT REASSURING THAT BY THIS AND ANOTHER IMPORTANT GESTURE VIS-VIS-US, RAMANANTSOA SEEMS

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DETERMINED TO BALANCE WELL-PUBLICIZED GOMR OVERTURES OVER PAST

TWO YEARS TOWARD COMMUNIST WORLD. FACT THAT HE HAS LEFT PORTUGAL MIN TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT ANDRIAMAHAZO IN CHARGE OF GOVT DURING ABSENCE IS ANOTHER CONFIRMATION OF THIS, ALTHOUGH AS SECOND-RANKING MILITARY OFFICER, ANDRIAMAHAZO COULD HAVE EXPECTED DESIGNATION ANYWAY.

3. WE WOULD HOPE RAMANANTSOA GESTURE TOWARD FRANCE WILL RESULT IN MORE FAVORABLE FRENCH GOVT ATTITUDE TOWARD CONTINUED AID TO MADAGASCAR. PRIOR THIS GOMR STEP, WE HAD BEEN TOLD BY BRITISH AMB CROSTHWAIT THAT FRENCH AID MISSION DIRECTOR BLANCHARD, JUST RETURNED FROM TRIP TO PARIS, HAD SAID HE COULD FIND NO INTEREST IN PARIS IN AID TO MADAGASCAR.

4. MEDIA AND MRS. RATSIRAKA HAVE CONFIRMED THAT FONMIN RATSIRAKA WILL BE PROCEEDING DIRECTLY FROM PARIS TO NEW YORK FOR ATTENDANCE AT SPECIAL UNGA. FRENCH CHARGE, WHO AS LATE AS 11:30 MORNING 04APR TOLD US FRENCH EMBASSY HAD NO IDEA WHO WOULD REPRESENT MADAGASCAR AT FUNERAL, MENTIONED THAT HE ASSUMED ONLY RATSIRAKA WOULD SINCE HE HAS APPOINTMENT 08APR WITH FRENCH FONMIN JOBERT IN PARIS.

5. RAMANANTSOA WAS NONCOMMITTAL TO PRESS CONCERNING DATE RETURN TO MADAGASCAR. IN VIEW FAMILY AND PROPERTY IN FRANCE, HE MAY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CEREMONIAL VISIT TO LOOK INTO PERSONAL MATTERS IN FRANCE WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN POLITICALLY UNTHINKABLE OTHERWISE.
MENDENHALL

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